

# 2023

## TN OPTIONS

### PROGRAM REPORT





**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
COMMISSION ON AGING AND DISABILITY**

Andrew Jackson State Office Building  
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Nashville, Tennessee 37243

James Dunn  
Executive Director

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January 11, 2023

The Honorable Rusty Crowe  
Suite 720 Cordell Hull Bldg.  
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.  
Nashville, TN 37243

The Honorable Bryan Terry  
Suite 646 Cordell Hull Bldg.  
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Chairman Crowe and Chairman Terry:

The OPTIONS for Community Living program was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1999 to serve older individuals and adults with disabilities that do not qualify for Medicaid long-term care services. OPTIONS is an entirely state funded program, which is used for personal care, homemaker services, home-delivered meals, and transportation services.

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §71-2-105(a)(11), the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability is required to provide an "updated report and analysis of the waiting list for the state OPTIONS program" annually to the Tennessee General Assembly.

Enclosed you will find a copy of this year's updated report, which includes data and a brief analysis regarding the waiting list for the program.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Tennessee's aging population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Dunn".

James Dunn  
Executive Director  
Enclosure: 2023 Tennessee OPTIONS Program Report

For the members' benefit, the report and analysis are laid out as follows:

- (1) A description of the OPTIONS program.
- (2) The current funding level for the program.
- (3) The actual number of people on the waiting list for the program.
- (4) An analysis of the waiting list.

### **OPTIONS Program Description**

The OPTIONS for Community Living program was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1999 to serve older individuals and adults with disabilities who do not qualify for Medicaid long-term care services. OPTIONS is a state funded program. The funding can be used for personal care, homemaker services, home-delivered meals, transportation assistance, or other supportive services. The average annual cost per Tennessean served by OPTIONS is approximately \$2,900. As of November 30, 2022, there were 2,120 individuals presently enrolled in the OPTIONS program.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals placed their traditional services on hold due to concerns related to the spread of the coronavirus. Additional services were provided to ensure the needs of individuals in the program were met, such as purchase and/or delivery of groceries and household supplies, and medical equipment and supplies. In addition to client requests to place their services on hold, provider workforce shortages have been widely reported statewide.

### **The Current Funding Level**

In FY 2022, TCAD received \$9,590,800 in state appropriations for the OPTIONS program and an additional \$9,700,000 with the purpose of clearing the OPTIONS waitlist.

### **Waiting List**

As of November 2022, the waiting list numbers for OPTIONS as defined by the nine Area Agencies on Aging and Disability (AAAD) are as follows:

<b>AAAD Name</b>	<b># of Individuals on Waiting List at End of November 2022 for Category A &amp; B</b>
First TN	525
East TN	694
Southeast TN	469
Upper Cumberland	632
Greater Nashville Regional Council	283
South Central	519
Northwest TN	354

Southwest TN	193
Aging Commission of the Mid-South	226
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,895</b>

### **Analysis of the Waiting List**

Individuals obtain OPTIONS services by contacting their local AAAD through TCAD's Information and Assistance line (1-866-836-6678). Any individual that requests in-home services is screened on the telephone using an intake screening. The intake screening collects information that identifies risk factors or conditions that indicate the need for long-term supports and services. Screened individuals who have a total score of three activities of daily living (ADLs)/instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) limitations or a total score of two ADL/IADL limitations with documented cognitive impairment who request in-home services may be placed on the OPTIONS waiting list. Those individuals that qualify for Medicaid are referred to the TennCare program. These guidelines are consistent with the minimum requirements to receive services.

After the intake screening, individuals are placed on the waiting list based on a screening prioritization score placing those with the highest score at the top of the waiting list. The screening prioritization score considers their ADL/IADL score, the amount of informal/formal support they currently have, overall health, and income level. No individual is denied services due to income; however, there is a sliding scale in place for individuals that have a higher income. Individuals that the AAAD can expect to serve within the next 18 months are placed on the Category A waiting list allowing AAADs to maintain contact with them. TCAD staff in conjunction with AAAD staff work to determine the number of individuals that can be served in Category A based on trends and data analysis. Those individuals who are not expected to be served within the next 18 months are placed in Category B and contact is maintained on a less frequent basis. The number of individuals needing access to OPTIONS services continues to grow. Yet, the funding to provide OPTIONS services is limited and issues with provider staffing and coverage continue to be reported statewide.

Enrollment in the OPTIONS program is driven by the amount of available funding and providers. When there is an opening available, individuals are pulled from the waiting list based on their screening prioritization score. Individuals with the highest risk are pulled off first. An assessment is then completed which gathers further information about their health and nutritional status, financial status, functional limitations, home environment, and social support system. The AAAD OPTIONS counselor along with the individual and family, if available, then develop a plan to deliver in-home services.

Individuals come off the waiting list for various reasons, including, but not limited to, the following: they get enrolled into the OPTIONS program; they become eligible for another program; their condition improves; or their condition deteriorates to the point where they enter long-term care facilities (such as a nursing home).

## **Summary**

There continues to be unmet needs in the OPTIONS program based on the foregoing factors listed above. There are currently 3,895 individuals waiting for services. Provider workforce shortages are being reported statewide. With the average annual cost of services being \$2,900 per individual, it would cost \$11,544,900 to provide services to these individuals. TCAD, in partnership with the AAADs, will continue to try and increase the number of individuals that can be served under the OPTIONS program by using best practices to maximize the resources and current funding that we receive for the program.

For additional information please contact Mason Devers, Communications Director and Legislative Liaison, [Mason.Devers@tn.gov](mailto:Mason.Devers@tn.gov).